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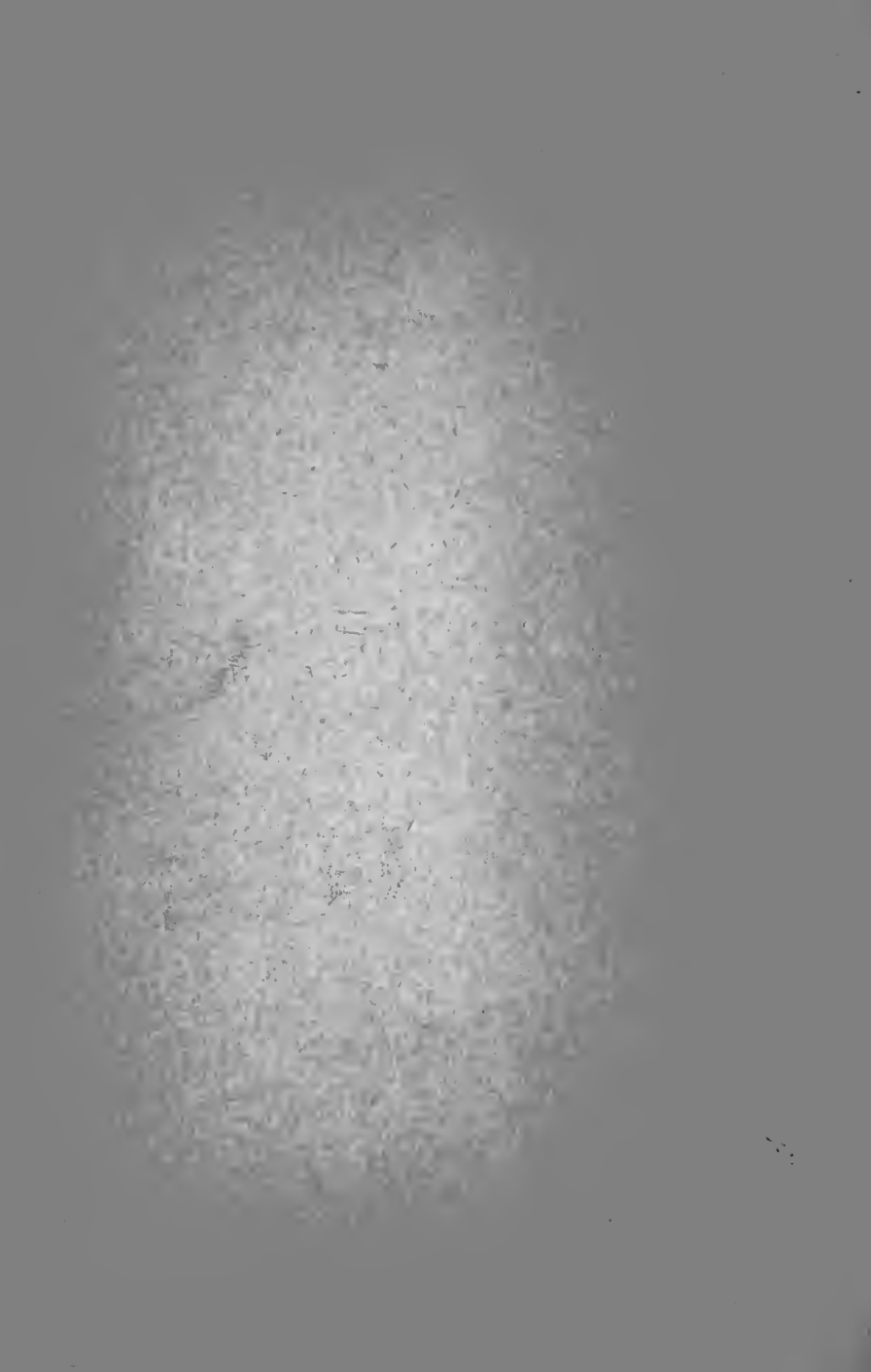
PRO POETA

AND OTHER POEMS.

WITH FIRST BOOK

OF

Sherran
THE NEW COLUMBIAD.



PRO POETA

AND OTHER POEMS WITH FIRST BOOK

OF

THE NEW COLUMBIAD,

BY

WILLIAM SHERAN.

*Rise, resty Muse, my love's sweet face survey,
If Time have any wrinkle graven there ;
If any, be a satire to decay,
And make Time's spoils despised everywhere.*

—SHAKESPEARE.



38439 Y'

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PRO POETA.

I.

A willing tribute may we prize
To him who pours his soul in song,
Who looks with fancy's sleepless eyes
On worlds where greater glories throng;

Whose heart with passion strong inwrought,
Throbs with the pulse of human life,
Now fierce, as swells the fevered thought
And calm, when dies all hate and strife:

He lauds the record of the brave
And true and good: he wars on wrong,
And how the virtues lift and save
Is made the burden of his song.

If swallow-like these variant lays
But skim the ocean of his deeds—
Enough, they try to speak his praise,
For larger harvest sowing seeds.

II.

How oft thy soul is borne along,
And made to feel a heavenly thrill
While sunk in depths of some sweet song,
A captive to the poet's will.

It leaves our little earth behind,
Those narrow views so sadly real,
So common to our human kind,
And enters on a world ideal.

There, nature blooms — all loveliness :
There harmonies forever blend :
There, man, devoid of selfishness,
Moves forward to a joyous end.

And, lingering in that higher sphere,
Creation of a poet's pen,
Thy soul finds not the grossness here,
Nor crime that stains the lives of men.

III.

The bleak winds sigh thro' leafless trees
And pile the blinding snow in heaps
And shake the window pane and sieze
With icy hand the noisy deeps.

Within, beside the glowing fire
I trim the mid-night lamp, nor feel
The rolling hours, my sole desire
From poesy her sweets to steal.

No traveler wandering o'er the moor,
Or waif on marble steps unsought,
Or storm that forests scarce endure
Can win from me a passing thought,

Until the thrilling numbers turn
On some poor wretch who strayed and froze
One winter's night, whom wealth would spurn,
Should fate palatial homes disclose.

IV.

A bloom is on the earth, the stream
Sweeps gaily on to swell the sea,
And nature from her winter dream
Gives thousand proofs that she is free.

Aroused, she puts in shrub and flower
A portion of her energy,
And by kind heat and ready shower
Decks field and garden, wild and lea.

No longer by the fire-side
Sits horny-handed labor mute;
The kine break into meads denied,
And slumbering seeds find life and root.

Awake, O poet, now hath come
The hour to pour thy soul in song—
Woodland and meadow are in bloom
Arouse, and move with life along.

V.

At play upon the azure space,
 Their shadows trailing o'er the lea,
The thin, white cloudlets float apace
 Like ships upon the dark blue sea.

The hills and valleys far below
 Re-echo to the reaper's song,
And woods are still and waters low:
 The brook in silence steals along.

Embowered in a shady nook
 Round which the woodland glooms, I lie
And, turning from an open book,
 I lift to heaven a wearied eye,

And marvel how poetic skill
 Can reach the fibres of the heart
And stir the depths of love and fill
 The soul as if by magic art.

VI.

'Tis autumn! woods are russet clad :
A haze hangs over field and vale :
The smile of summer sweet and glad
Is gone: the drowsy stream looks pale

As if he dreaded winter's wand
Would change him soon to icy coil,
Hard by the plow in rustic hand
Turns up again the hopeful soil.

Oh fading year, in dim old age
What thoughts thou callest to the mind
Of happier days, that brighter page
Where youth has left its trace behind !

When passing from the eyes of men,
Whose lasting honor will it be
To linger by thy couch, and pen
Immortal lines concerning thee?

VII.

Has our age heroes? men who leave
 Their impress on our life and state?
Who in the strength of *acts* believe
 And fight and win and laugh at fate?

Who now within the council hall
 And now upon the gory field,
Mid hissing tongue and cannon ball,
 Cling to the right, their crown and shield.

For them the poet builds a song
 In monumental epic tiers
That rings through ages loud and long,
 And fails not with the cycling years.

No monument of earth or stone
 Presents to view such wondrous whole:
They speak unto the eye alone,
 The epic trances eye and soul.

VIII.

At eve we see the slanting rays
Speed their wild flight across the sky—
The setting sun in spreading blaze
Climbs cloudy summits far and nigh.

Now slowly comes a colder wave
Of air around us, as we mark
In the far west, as in a grave,
The last faint streaks of day grow dark.

Did Homer view a grander sight
While standing on the Grecian plain,
Or think more beautiful to write
Than when the sunbeams strive in vain

To combat 'gainst the dusky host
That twilight summons from afar:
Though strong the towers that guard their coast,
Like Ilion once, they fall by war.

IX.

Oh, love the poet, cherish not
Those feelings that the world inspires,
For in his lay hate is forgot,
And coldness in his pure desires.

Could Shakespeare but re-live on earth
(Though once has quite sufficed to show
The poet's love and sterling worth)
Who would not run to hear and know?

Who would not kneel and kiss the hand
That wielded such a mighty pen?
Thinkest thou, as stranger in the land,
His life would pass unknown to men?

Learn then a lesson from that bard
And melt the coldness that surrounds
At least one heart by due regard
To him whose harp for thee resounds.

X.

But give me back my peace of mind,
That peace I knew in childhood days
Ere I had left young joys behind
And entered upon sinful ways.

When into mead and wood I strayed
And drunk the sweetness of the rose,
And marked where light and shadow played
Beneath the Oak and Birchen bows.

And if forbidden, let some song
Give echo to that dear old past—
Some roundelay whose words prolong
It's pleasures, ah! too sweet to last.

Let gentle measures softly flow
And speak the peace of childhood hours
That ripe old age may hear and know
How sadly sinful time deflowers.

XI.

I linger now upon the beach
 Piled high with centuries of sand,
And wish to know what waves can teach—
 Those waves that circle every land.

For ages they have swept the sea
 And dashed against resounding shores :
For ages are they wild and free
 As an eagle when he heavenward soars.

Go find a tongue for these wild waves
 And change their sounds to eloquence ;
For now they are like one who raves
 In maddened crowds devoid of sense.

Hark ! now I hear majestic roll,
 Not of the waves, but measured lines—
They seem to catch the very soul
 Of which wave-dashings are but signs.

XII.

Why these wild efforts to attain
The beautiful in all, man tries?
Is it a longing here to gain
The loveliness that never dies?

It is a longing to express
The myriad gleams of beauty caught
From fonts above, all men confess
It never can be theirs unsought.

And hence supernal beauty draws
That daily effort of the soul
To apprehend the final cause
And mould its thought to perfect whole.

So marble speaks the sculptor's mind,
And canvas glows from passion strong;
But nowhere does this effort find
Such true expression as in song.

XIII.

We have but fragments of the truth,
 Though in us lies a fierce desire .
To grasp at all and be forsooth,
 What pride angelic would require.

Yet, though in broken parts we deal,
 Each is a triumph of some mind,
And all united makes us feel
 To human lot far more resigned.

The poet molds these thoughts anew
 And stamps them with immortal die,
Brings mental treasures into view
 That else in dust and dark would lie.

And it is often true that he
 Who does so much, has for return
From human kind blank misery,
 A cheerless home, a pauper's urn.

XIV.

The lover on the new made grave
Kneels pensive, now the bitter tear
Steals down her cheek; no hand could save
What she has held on earth most dear.

Oh God, her breaking heart would know
Thy mercy in this awful hour!
But grant a tongue to grief and show
A kindly light through clouds that lour. .

What gentle numbers greet her ear
As soft and soothing as the spell
That music weaves when moonlight clear
Sleeps on sea waves that sink and swell.

Her suffering spirit grows more calm;
Some one has felt and told its woe;
The wounded heart has found a balm,—
Half reconciled she turns to go.

XV.

The steel-grey light falls on the field,
 Soon o'er the mountain climbs the sun ;
Westward pale Shadow bears his shield;
 Life beats again—day has begun.

But dark and dead as was the world
 Before the brightening sunbeams came
Were life, had love not backward hurled
 Encroaching foes and put to shame.

The poet teaches purest love,
 Not such as in the miser burns,
Or in the breast of Caesar throve,
 Or at the whim of party turns.

But such as rests with God alone
 And binds creation unto him—
Such as will stay when years have flown,
 And e'en with death itself not dim.

XVI.

The bird sings o'er me in the trees,
Whose broad boughs mingle grateful shade:
Tost lightly with the stirring breeze,
The songster's nest hard by is laid.

The song is of the summer wood
When labors of the spring are crowned,
And man and beast find common good,
In ripening treasures scattered round.

It wins the heart from ways of woe
E'en though the senseless organs cloy.
Oh friend, thou can'st not choose but go
And hear the lay and share the joy.

I hear the answer made to me:
Those wood-land songs are sweet and clear;
But sweeter far is wont to be
The song of poet to mine ear.

XVII.

A dew drop on this violet

So bright and tiny here now shows
The skies with stellar diamonds set,
And all the beauty they disclose.

A perfect mirror is its eye

Of world on world that rolls above,
Of countless systems circling by—
All glories off-spring of God's love.

Poetic soul in miniature,

Thus types infinitude of truth,
Of truth that must for aye endure,
Rejoicing in perpetual youth.

Yes, truth that reaches far beyond

The soundings of the vulgar mind,
E'er for the shallow parts more fond,
Unskilled to see what lies behind.

XVIII.

At eve the whitening vapor steals
 Along the valley, up the lawn,
And day-worn labor weary feels,
 And sinks to rest till break of dawn.

I watch the mist as slowly o'er
 The quiet vales it 'gins to rise,
And thicken ever more and more
 'Till sight of wood and hollow dies.

Just so oblivion might come
 Like that dank vapor o'er the lea,
When sound of busy life is dumb
 And shroud our works eternally,

Were it not for poetic lay
 Uprising as the dawning sun
To drive oblivious clouds away
 When earthly struggles will be done.

XIX.

The greatest epics are unsung;
The strongest love finds not a word;
The noblest heart is often wrung
With life amid a grovelling herd.

No marvel then, that one should hear
A poet died in some drear lane
Forgotten by the world,—its tear
Would stain his grave, would fall in vain.

For should tears fall, no longer true
To an old baseness would it be,
Of its cold heart he felt—and knew
Nor asks in death false sympathy.

Yet one, who loves the good, the brave,
May twine a wreath of flowers there,
May kneel beside that humble grave
And for his spirit breathe a prayer.

XX.

Why is it that poetic mind
By some strange magic can endue
Whatever it may see or find
With fairest form and loveliest hue—

A beauty breaking everywhere,
Be it of rill, or tree, or bird,
Or wood, or mead—the good and fair
Alone are seen, alone are heard.

His mind must teem with what it gives,
As grain of musk with sweet perfume,
Else in those mansions where it lives,
The foul and fair would each find room.

Much like the gentle spring, its touch
Brings out the fairer, brighter hue
And lovelier form we prize so much,
While shrouding that from which they grew.

XXI.

Verse makers by the score are found
Whose rhyming mocks the God-like art
Of poetry ; this class abound
And play a meaner, baser part

Than worthless rock that mountain high
Wards entrance to the gold inside,
As rocks, forsooth, will never try
For what their nature has denied.

Yet jingling sounds in measure wrought
May sometime catch the vulgar ear ;
So their smooth words divorced of thought
Will oft as poetry appear.

Buzz on, poor flies, soon Mother Age
Must set tormented list'ners free—
Then who will turn your musty page
And read a graceless mimicry.

XXII.

Our speech and thought so interweave
Whoever moulds the first will show
What we admire, hope and believe,
What acts from mortal agent flow.

Yea more : he gives the soul a lyre
More subtle than a syren's song,
And by sweet love or fierce desire
Its strings are wildly swept along.

This has the poet done since time
Saw Adam from fair Eden driven—
Truth by him is bound fast to rhyme,
And every mortal under heaven

Sometime has known his thrilling lay
And hope or love or pleasure caught ;
And often felt quite borne away
On swelling music of his thought.

XXIII.

The poet does not prove : he stands
 With hidden truth quite face to face :
A doubtful creed alone demands
 The philosophic knife and mace.

He looks into the human heart
 And sees its inmost workings plain —
All mysteries at once depart —
 All carping logic is in vain.

And ever on to more and more
 He bears wrapt souls until they see
That higher goal, that farther shore
 Where larger truth is known to be.

Beneath the surface does he go,
 Behind the shifting mask of things
Where firmly and immortal grow
 The changeless truths of which he sings.

XXIV.

What mighty magic plays around
In sea and land and starry dome—
Where'er you go is beauty found,
A blushing glory where you roam.

Be it beside the tinkling rill,
Or on the snow-capped mountain height,
Or when the blushing mornings fill
The dim air with their ambient light,

So, too, when evening shadows fall,
And silvery rays steal from the moon
On darkened nature—over all
Is cast a beauty late or soon.

Imprint it on thy living lines
Oh poet, that the world may know
Thou read'st the great Magician's signs
Thro' forms of matter here below.

XXV.

Amid the flowers I now discern
A humming bird in emerald coat ;
Above their pure white petals burn
The flecks of fire upon his throat.

Sweet songster of the flowery world,
I hear thy charming melody
While from its graceful knot uncurled
Thy curving lance probes thievishly.

Much like the poet art thou there
In wilderness of calm delights ;
He glories in like sun and air
And feeds his eye on beauteous sights.

Likewise his thrilling notes are heard
By those who toil in field beyond,
And listening souls are ever stirred,
And of his presence grow more fond.

XXVI.

The poet teaches that our soul
Has its true home in world's unknown ;
Where waves of boundless yearning roll,
Where all our larger hopes have flown.

He teaches that 'twill dwarf and pine
When centered in gross earthly thought,
That shadows round us here combine,
And less than God is hardly aught.

You take exception to his word,—
Poor sensual man in dust enrobed !
You own not that which is not heard,
You doubt what senses never probed !

But bear in mind our lot is cast
Upon the shifting sands of time,
And deathless life alone will last,
And thought and hope and love sublime.

XXVII.

To works that soonest will decay
Great nature gives a hasty birth,
But countless ages roll away
In forming those of lasting worth.

Hence towers the mountain rock apace
And points eternal to the sky
While gross weeds at its rugged base
Live with the year—as quickly die.

So genius in poetic realm
Hath builded up immortal song,
That rolling years may never whelm
Though all else vanish as they throng.

How can it be? In vain you ask.
Strange Genius cannot be defined—
She ever wears an inviolate mask,
Is more than time and skill combined.

XXVIII.

The poet's song is not required
For those who wallow in delights
Of sense and vulgar gain: 'tis fired
By nobler purpose and it fights,

That intellect may triumph o'er
The sensual man and leave him free,
That knowledge growing more and more
Alone may have sweet mastery.

Upward to point and lead the way
Toward realms of wisdom and of love;
Onward to move where growing day
Reveals dim glories far above.

Such is poetic task:—and none
Can harmonize our love and thought
So sweetly as the gifted one
Whose swelling music comes unsought.

XIX.

'Tis evening and the storm is o'er :
Thro' cloud-rents break the deep-blue skies :
Far eastward drives the wrack and roar :
Slowly a western glory dies.

Beneath the slow-emerging stars
I mark the wizard lightnings play —
Dream-like they dance on cloudy bars
Now fading in the gloom away.

The leaden vapors all are gone
And purer air around me hies :
I feel cold shadows creeping on :
A soft wind in the tree-top sighs.

Oh poet, 'tis an hour for thee
To keep thy golden harp in tune,
Like yon sweet bird that merrily
Carols unto the rising moon.

XXX.

Now at my feet the ocean rolls:

Broad, boundless, free, its murmur charms.

In every clime e'en to the poles

Reach out its gray, embracing arms.

Move on, thou tossing element,

Bring sails unto the farthest shore,

Chafe sides of many a continent,

And grow in splendor more and more.

As broadly as thy vast expanse,

As deeply as thy sullen base,

Methinks I see poetic glance

Peer into secrets of our race,

And mists that shroud the form of truth,

And words that cloud the light of love,

And all the mysteries that youth

And age find here, below, above.

XXXI.

Who 'neath the threats of man will cower,
And drag an honest conscience down,
And keep a creed to suit the hour
Can never win th' immortal crown.

High may he be in wealth or rank,
Proud to possess an envied name,
Yet coming ages will be frank
And heap on him a coward's shame.

Oh poet, if thy song would move,
Let manly heart and purpose speak
Thro' every line; else none can love,
When it is known that thou wert weak.

In vain thy polished sentence rings,
In vain thy voice cries out at sin,
If all will say: 'tis thus he sings,
But to live thus must yet begin.

XXXII.

A brooding sorrow wraps me up
 In its dark folds; mine eyes are dim;
I drank of fortune's bitter cup
 And now I feel my senses swim.

How dark the world around me now,
 And dark the ways of human life;
Come night and scowl with sullen brow,
 Come hate and tell thy tales of strife.

I list to pride and pomp no more,
 Earth has no bauble that can claim
Ambition's flight—her days are o'er,
 And leave me without hope or aim.

But sing to me thou gentle one,
 And make thy song a subtle thief:
Oft hath the founts of helicon
 Brought to a sorrowing soul relief.

XXXIII.

The poet gives the rill a tongue
To whisper as it tinkles by,
How flowers on its green sides hung
All beauty of the mead defy.

Thro' him the mountain tells its years,
How long the torrent on its side
Wore down those massive rocky tiers
Into the chasm gaping wide.

Thro' him yon cloud that rides asleep
Upon the azure sea of heaven,
Speaks softly of those stars that peep
Behind it at the close of even.

Dead forms are vocal at his word,
And mount and mead, and sea and sky,
Speak out as if they saw and heard,
And to our questions make reply.

XXXIV.

The palsied hand is weak with age,
It trembles in its last decay ;
Cold powers of the grave now wage
Successful war and steal away

The last sad hopes of lengthening years,
The last sweet solace of life's woe ;
Yet with a love too deep for tears,
Is sung a song of the long ago.

Of the long ago when childhood chased
The sunny hours in gladsome wood
Around the haunts that time effaced,
Amid the memory living wood.

All else is gone, the fruit and flower
Of life is plucked and long since dead ;
Yet song still cheers this gloomy hour,
When all save life itself has fled.

ODE TO MORNING.

Sweetly the bells of the morning are ringing
Sweetly the birds on the tree-tops are singing--
Day hath begun.

Over the mountain his bright banner beaming,
Over the valley his golden light streaming,
Comes the glad sun.

Now in the dew-drop his image is dancing,
Now on the wave are his swift coursers prancing,
Bright golden beams.

See how they furrow the east as they hasten,
See with what skill they deshadow and chasten
Pale drowsy streams.

Brim full of life these glide on to the ocean,
And join in renewing to God a devotion
Treasured above.

Waken, oh man, from thy death-like composure,
Waken, oh waken, and pay with all nature
Thy tribute of love.

WHAT WAS.

As blind waves feel along a shore
That curves within an ocean cave,
So feel I for the things of yore
Far back in time's dark vaulted grave.

A fruitless task: one looks in vain
Amid the ruins of the past
For what man toiled with so much pain—
An empty grave-yard lone and vast.

TO-MORROW.

How oft we speak this word, and 'hope to be
Much nobler, purer, holier, than now!

Yet when to-morrow comes, alas we see
No great advance: again to sin we bow,

And yield, the Tempter triumphs as before,
And makes a mockery of good intent:
'Twere better name to-morrow nevermore,
Than it should close with this sad truth "ill spent."

THE PAGAN HELL.

(VIRGIL, VI BOOK)

Aeneas, looking back, beheld to right
Neath a huge boulder prisons vast, round which
A triple wall looms up; encircling this,
Tartarean Phelegeton rolls his swift waves
Of torrent fire: against the sounding rocks
He thunders, heaving them with crashing sounds.
The gate on adamantine pillars hung,
No force of man or heaven could break down
Save Jove himself; so firmly is it built.
Surmounting it an iron turret stands
Of lofty height, on which a Fury sits,
Tisiphone, with bloody cincture girt:
Sleepless she guards the entrance day and night.
Here groans are heard and strokes of cruel whips.
And clanking chains by captives dragged around.
Thus to the querying Trojan spoke his guide:
The pure cannot set foot within those walls
Where Radamanthus rules with iron hand;
He hears the guilty story of the damned
And meets out punishment; confessions now

Are forced from those who in the upper worlds,
Rejoicing in an empty hope, put off
Repentance till a sudden death dismissed
With all their loads of crimes to Tartarus.
Tisiphone insulting plies the scourge
And brandishes her twirling snakes aloft,
Then calls her sister furies: now the gate
On creaking hinges backward flies; you see
The kind of guardian there, a Hydra huge,
With hundred gaping mouths, lies near on guard.
Now Tartarus itself extends beneath the shades—
A deep and dark abyss, in length as far
As twice the distance from earth's central point
To high Olympus: here the Titan youth,
Ancient inhabitants of earth are found,
Their monstrous bodies rolling in the deep,
Hurled down and crushed by thunderbolts of Jove.
Here the twin sons of Alous are seen—
Gigantic forms. They dared to rend the heavens
And thrust Jove out from his imperial realms,
But failed in the attempt. Here writhes in pain
Salmonea who strove to counterfit

Jove's thunder; in a four-horse chariot,
He drove thro' Grecian cities, torch in hand,
And claimed those honors which to God are due.
Madman, to think Heaven's livery could be feigned,
The inimitable lightnings and the clouds
And prancing horn-hoofed steeds that there attend;
But the Almighty Father from dense clouds
Makes ready his swift thunder-bolt for him,
(Not torches, he, nor smoky light of pine)
And whirlwind-like beats the foul wretch to earth.
And Tytan too, earth's foster parent, lies
In this abyss profound: nine acres scarce
Can furnish room for him; at length
Is stretched his awful body;—on it perched
An eagle sits and with his hooked beak
Pecks the immortal liver rich with pain,
Digs for his food and nestles in the breast
While the re-knitting fibers grant no peace.
Why should I call to mind Pirithous,
And Ixion and Lapithas o'er whom
Impending rocks hang loose: ever they seem
To fall, yea even now: here we see spread

In royal luxury the banquet stores
Before the very eyes of famished souls;
Yet just beside a Fury is on guard,
And keeps the thronging number from the feast;
Fearful in look she chides with threatening tones.
Here the blood-sprinkled fratricide is seen,
And he who struck an aged parent down,
The thieving lawyer whose sole thought had been
To cheat his fellow-man, and he who broods
On golden treasures, careless of the cry
That neighboring poverty sends forth. Here wait
The foul adulteress and the traitorous knave
Who sold his country, turned his master's hand
To gain forbidden wealth. Seek not to know
Their various fortune and sharp punishment.
Some roll a mighty rock; some tied to spokes
Of circling wheels, forever spin around:
Unhappy Theseus thus requits the gods.
Had I a hundred tongues, a hundred mouths,
A voice of iron, I could not unfold
The various kinds of crime and punishment.

GOLD.

What prize is that for which men strive so hard?
Gold? Can it be this yellow glittering stuff,
Another form of dust, so wins the heart,
So steals an entrance to their every thought,
And gives ambition wing! Yet, it is so.
That shining grain can work a miracle,
Nay many; it recalls dead dreams to life,
Touches the sick and they rejoice in health,
Makes the blank wilderness bloom like the rose,
And scatters many blessings far and near.
Hence doth man prize it so. Yet gold hath wrought
The deeds of darkness; now it opes the cell
And leaves the lawless free, now stays the arm
Of outraged justice, wins the smiles of kings:
Makes the strong tremble and the coward bold;
Oft stoops the pure soul from its lofty height
To worship this vile creature of the dust.

VIA RECTA.

There is a way that seemeth to man right ;
Yet it doth lead to evil ; one may find
Upon the ruffled sea of human life,
In our own age this ancient truth confirmed.
Now see we those who launch their fragile bark
Regardless of the winds, regarding not
The warning voice of wise experience,
That voice which speaks so truly unto them
But falls in vain upon their foolish ear.
Yes, vainly falls — they tempt the angry waves
With flowing sail, go down and are no more.
Wrecks find we all along life's trodden coast
And wrecked by whom ? Let false opinion tell,
And that pert judgment which young minds possess ;
That fancy which so gaily paints our lives
In time to come withdrawing from the gaze,
By shading colors, what is best to know.

THE PAST.

Oh, let me not recall the bitter past !
The desert of my life lies hidden there :
'Tis true some flowers bloomed, yet faded fast
And left a sandy waste, dry, cold and bare.

Had I the choice, I would not live again,
And all this human suffering undergo ;
Much better in the grave than among men
Where one must count few friends and many a foe.

Then o'er that waste a darkening shadow cast,
And let oblivion overwhelm it with the years
That roll swiftly by, naught there should last
Or merit human sympathy or tears.

Unless it be some struggle for the right,
Some sinless act done by poor sinful man —
All else envelope in the darkest night
And one glad heart at least will say " amen."

ONLY A STAR.

Only a star
Shining afar
In the blue depths of heaven!
Long may it shine,
A gift divine,
Thro' murky shades of even.
Emblem of hope
To those who grope
O'er devious ways of danger:
In blackest night,
A diamond bright,
To cheer and light the stranger.
Shine on, O star,
And near and far
Reflect thy heavenly splendor,
And, tho' alone
In sapphire zone,
Give glory to thy maker.

ILLUSIONS.

Are these illusions round us here—
The birds' sweet song, the golden morn,
And all the glories that adorn
Woodland and meadow far and near?

Can it be true the budding rose
And gray old oak, now decked in green,
And snow-capped peak in grandeur seen
Fail from the earth as melting snows?

Not so: with years we pass away,
And leave the haunts of sun and shade,
And all the beauty life has made;
But they live on, nor know decay.

PRAYER.

Sweet is thy influence, balm of wounded souls,
Restoring angel to the fallen given,
Whose voice the rage of passion oft controls
And wins for troubled hearts, the peace of heaven.

ENTRANCE TO HELL.

(VIRGIL, VI BOOK.)

ENVironed by a gloomy lake
And darksome wilderness,
A rocky cavern deep and wide
Leads down to Tartarus.

Above no bird can wing its way
Such exhalations rise—
The foulness from this grimy mouth
Steams up into the skies.

The rites performed, oblations made,
Æneas waits his guide;
And, lo, as morning sun returns
How shakes the mountain side!

Yon woody heights are trembling now,
And dogs thro' darkness howl—
A goddess o'er the mountain top
Nears to the entrance foul.

“Grasp tight thy sword and follow me,
Yea follow close behind;
Thy every power call on now,
Be firm in heart and mind.”

“For into hell’s dark depths we go
Where mortal has not trod,”
Æneas boldly grasps his sword
And follows at her nod.

Obscured beneath the shades of night,
Thro’ gloomy homes of Dis
And regions dismal, dark and drear
In silence soon they pass ;

As travellers wandering in a wood
Hold on over lonesome ways
’Neath the moon’s pale uncertain light
When clouds overspread the skies.

Now in the very jaws of hell
They meet revengeful Care
And wan Disease and mourning Age
And Famine everywhere.

They meet with Death’s half brother Sleep,
And horrid Death hard by ;
Fraud, Force and Fear and Sorrow greet
The strangers drawing nigh.

Centaurs and Hydras next appear,
 Briareus with hundred hands
And Gorgons fierce and spectres bold—
 Chimera flaming stands.

Æneas, troubled at the sight
 Unsheathes his trusty steel,
And on the mocking phantoms round
 Now eagle-like would wheel,

Had not the Sibyl interposed—
 She calms his rising fear
By stating that these thronging forms
 Were but impassive air.

Now to dark Acheron they come
 Whose turbid waters pour
A loathsome flood and bear aloft
 Unto the farther shore

The bark of Charon brimming o'er
 With freight of human ghosts;
That hoary boatman fiery eyed
 Gives passage to the hosts.

A motley crowd press ever on
Where others late have stood,
And from the boatman beg a chance
To cross the Stygian flood.

Into the boat the Sybil went
And Æneas in turn—
Soon were they landed on the shore
Whence mortals ne'er return.

THE MIDNIGHT HOUR.

THE midnight hour was cold and mute
As I wandered thro' the wood
Complaining of the woes of life
To the trees that round me stood
Awakened from their peaceful sleep,
They cast on me a pitiful eye
And bowed their heads and made reply:
Poor child of earth, we know thy grief
And ask thee in prayer to find relief.
If thou wilt turn to God in prayer,
Thy troubled heart will find comfort there:
To things of earth thou wilt turn in vain
As they cannot lessen a spirit's pain.

THE MATERIALIST.

He stood beside the restless sea
And watched its wild waves mount in glee
And break with laughing sound
While fading from the western sky
The glow of eve began to die
And shadows steal around.

Alone he stood and mused : Oh soul
Why is it that thy fancies roll
Like waves upon the sea,
Now dashing 'gainst a barren hope
Now sweeping thro' the boundless scope
Of dark Eternity.

Mark how the sun's last feeble ray
Melts in the ether far away
Before the deepening gloom :
So shall thy hope that now would soar
Where pain and death are found no more,
Be lost within the tomb.

Then leave my poor wracked brain in peace,
Of future pain or pleasure cease
To din into my ears;
Let conscience laden with grave doubt
And qualms untold at last find out
Oblivion of its fears —

That sweet oblivion known to those
Who moulder careless of life's woes,
 Where gentle ivies creep,
Forgetful of the stormy past,
Resting their weary minds at last
 In eternal sleep.

Why make me feel a keen remorse
If nothing better, nothing worse
 Than this life is thy goal.
'Tis vain that conscience points within
To hideous spots and stains of sin—
 Vain is thy faith, oh soul!

Then grant this boon—oh set me free
From toils of doubt and mystery,
 Give o'er thy trust insane,
And all this strife will have an end
And peace like spell of night descend
 To calm my troubled brain.

What! wilt thou scorn my heart's request
And never grant this wished for rest,
 But wrack me as before?
Go, then, and prove what thou wouldst feel
I'll stay thee not—this glittering steel
 Will open wide the door.

Next morn a gastly corpse was found
Wooed by the mocking waves that wound
 Their foam wreathes o'er its hair,
Upon the pallid face upturned
Awakening beams of light discerned
 An image of despair.

HOPE.

How often comes a feeling of deep sadness
 That human life is vain,
When once is summed its moments brief of gladness
 And long, long years of pain.

Fame tempted, high we tread on paths of glory,
 For earthly honors live,
Then marvel at the pleasure transitory
 The best of these can give.

We look without, find all things empty, hollow,
 Unworthy of our love,
And turn with joy a Heavenly guide to follow
 And hopes that end above.

THE NEW COLUMBIAD.

BOOK I.

○f him who first across the Western Main,
Adventurous, sought in frail Hispanian bark
The shores of Royal Ind o'er seas unknown,
That man might sooner reach her genial clime
And know this world of ours orbicular,
Sing muse that oft the poet did inspire
Grand deeds of heroes and of arms to verse,
Now scaling heavenly heights, now venturing down
The dark abyss in aid of epic song.
Say how this genius bold of Genoa,
Thro' many weary years in many lands,
Scorned and dispised, won victory for truth
And gained for man two other continents
That still might feed the savage, worthless, wild,
Had not an iron will and stern resolve,
Combatted most by doubt and prejudice,
Met every obstacle and overcame.
And, thus declaring all his wondrous deeds,
Thou mayest render justice unto him
Whose name the western continents should bear;
For recompense such as his acts deserve

Is not here found save in immortal verse.
That much allow America to give
In honor of her great discoverer
And vouchsafe aid to these adventurous lines.
Now o'er the deep the sable wing of night
Had cast its shadow, and midst gathering gloom
Three barks; now westward far from the Azores
Full many a league, held their unfaltering course.
Upon the foremost deck, fearless and calm,
Amidst the timid sailors gathered round
Columbus stood, watching the silent stars
Steal one by one from out the depths of heaven
His pathless way to light or guide perchance.
Bowed was his form, the silvery hand of age
Had touched his locks and left upon his brow
Its furrowed traces, signs of toil and care.
Majestical in size, in look and act,
He bore about an air of dignity
That challenged admiration from all men.
And as he gazed upon the starry host
Whose glittering orbs drove darkness from the deep,
Astrologer he seemed whom destiny
Would grant a gracious knowledge by her signs

Read in the stellar lights; yet far beyond
Their brilliant course, on Him who gave them light
And being were his thoughts, nor fixed alone
In idle speculation, but deep moved
By silent prayer and conscious helplessness,
For well he knew that dangers were ahead
Though all was peaceful on the sleeping sea.
The long unfruitful voyage gave no hope
As yet to anxious followers; how soon
Their ill-restrained anger would compel
Return to Spain could not be now divined.
Anon he gazed upon the slackening sail
Scarce filled by evening breeze and presently
Boabdil caught his eye, Boabdil who
Was chosen by impatient followers
To seek an audience and declare their wish.
Thinking this moment fit when all stood by
To hear their captain speak, he thus began:
“Beloved chief, thou knowest all our fears
And hence must know the cause of our distress;
For nigh a fortnight have our vessels’ prows
Been pointing vainly to the Occident;
The sharpest ken of mariner yet finds

Nor land nor sign thereof, but far and near
Heaven's blue vault and a wide watery waste.
And more than this: the compass ever true
To point its needle toward the icy pole,
Directing man when on the ocean wave
How his craft may for any harbor steer,
Now varies in allegiance; this is proof
Of what tradition claims that in Atlantic seas
Beyond those isles from which we late embarked
A place is found where laws of nature cease,
The utmost point upon this plain terrene.
That reached, we're doomed to fall from off the earth
Into that abyss spoken of by seers
Where Hydra forms and monsters horrible
Howl nightly through deep shade, where light and
 peace
Are strangers, home of fiends and gorgons dread.
At thought of such a fate our blood runs cold.
Oh captain, change thy purpose, we beseech,
Tempt not too far the mercy of kind heaven
That has already a sure sign vouchsafed
Of danger imminent; let us give o'er
This mad pursuit and homeward turn our sail."

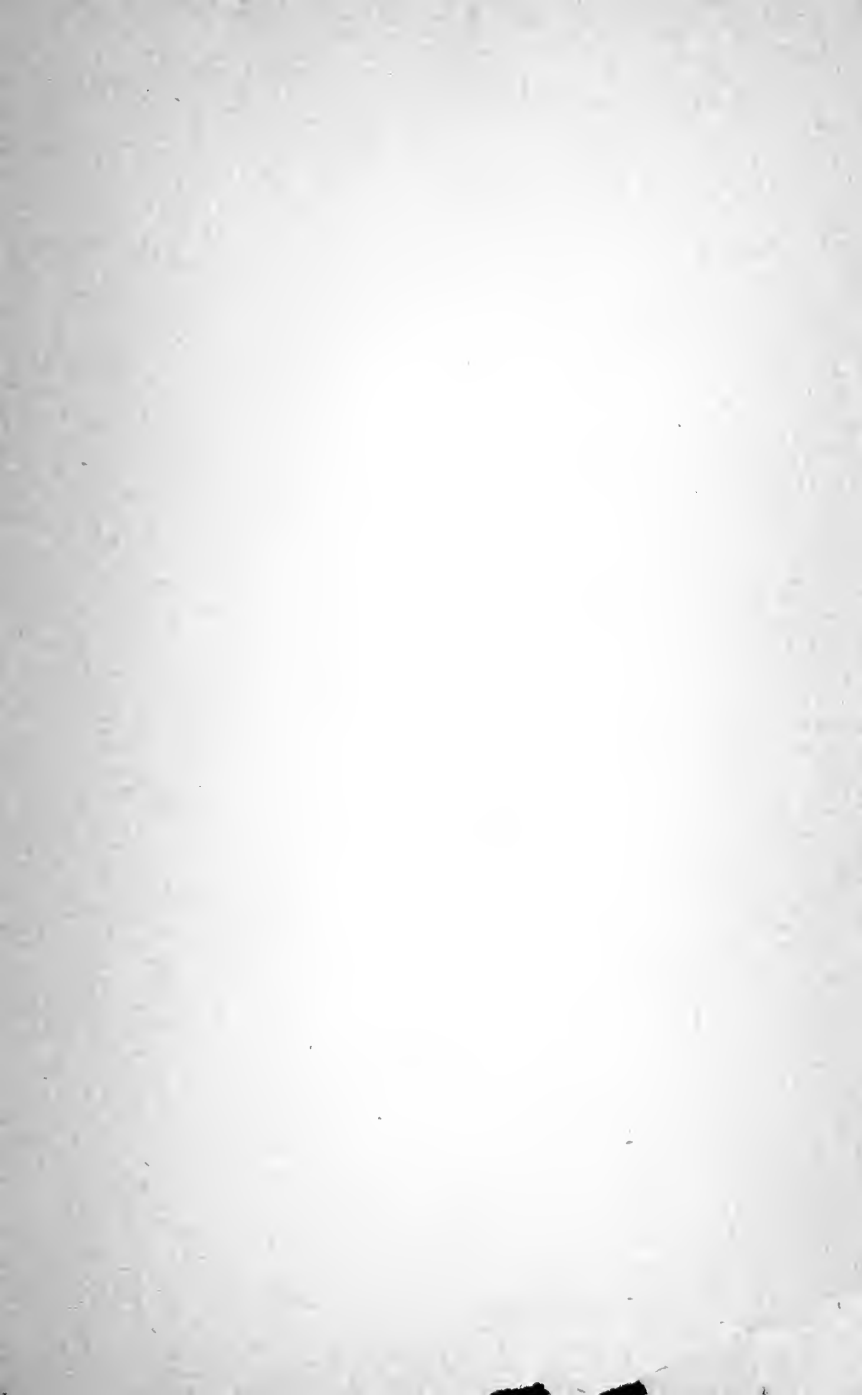
He ended; to his speech Columbus thus:
“Beloved Boabdil and companions dear,
Your fears are known to me nor think that I
Have lost compassion in my stern resolve
Of finding western path to Indian lands.
Well have I weighed the dangers of the course,
Attempting what was ne’er conceived before.
Long ere I launched upon Atlantic seas,
Or had secured from Isabella ships,
Or from her royal consort, Ferdinand,
Commission to explore what may lie hid
In Western hemisphere, I then foresaw
That difficulty greater would be found
In quelling false alarms or prejudice
Than ills those daring mariners must bear
Who venture far upon the Western seas.
Just one of many instances to cite:
When I approached the king of Portugal
And to his royal councillors made known
This plan of exploration, forthwith they:
‘We cannot favor this, your rash design,
Since it of sense or judgment savors nought.’
‘Know thou,’ they said, ‘o’erarching skies will fall,

Crushing to death that daring mariner
Who ventures close to the forbidden spot
Where they with earth's extremist rim conjoin.
We counsel thee to harbor saner thought
And chide back reason to her native seat.
With these insulting words did they express
What we have proven a lie; the sky above
Rests not upon the earth or long ere this
We would have reached that point fatal esteemed;
Its arch deceptive to the sight alone,
Betokens of this world sphericity;
Hence as we farther sail it e'er recedes
Like miraged oases in desert lands
Before the eager gaze of wanderers.
So then we might continue till the shore
Whence we have come, return unto our gaze.
And now the present matter to explain:
Tis true the compass fails, yet why alarm?
Had we assurance beyond all doubt
That on all seas in every latitude
Invariably true it would remain?
And surely other portents would appear
Did nature mean a surcease of her works;

Yet there are none; the golden sunlight falls
As it is wont from the great globe beyond
Whose office is to cheer the earth with day;
Morn bright and rosy as the primal beams
E'er made, and 'customed eve succeeds.
Take courage, then, companions of my lot,
Fear not while there is yet no cause of fear.
What would they say in Spain did we return?
Forgetful of all else, victims of dread,
Yielding to cowardice, ignoble end
To what may prove the grandest enterprize
E'er dreamed by mariner should we but on,
Regardless of misgivings timorous.
Kind Isabella, she whose wealth has manned
And fitted out these venturous barks of ours,
What condemnation would she not pronounce
On dastard act of turning now our sail!
No, we will never undergo the shame
Such base intent would bring, rather should we
Suffer our lifeless bodies wafted to the strand
Of far off Palos shipwrecked to be seen,
Than be tame victims to this coward fear.
But see! the moon's disk o'er the water's edge

Peers out triumphant, marking the pale dawn
Of the nocturnal day ; and as her silver veil
Hangs tremulous on the ocean's ruffled brow
Robbing the darkness of his ugly mien ;
So may those holy offices that now
Are ushered by the joyful vesper bell
Recall our wandering courage, make us brave
And cheer with hope our darkened, devious path,"
Thus kindly spoke their captain and his words
Finding an easy entrance to their hearts
Soothed many a troubled mind ; descend they now
To evening prayer, and o'er the waters far,
The choired voice in wavy volume floats,
Hymning to God the praise from mortals due.





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